General Studies 1181, F36: “A Nation of Cowboys: The Western and American Values.”

“A gun is a tool, Marian; no better or no worse than any other tool: an ax, a shovel or anything. A gun is as good or as bad as the man using it. Remember that.” Shane (Alan Ladd), Shane, 1953

“It’s a hell of a thing, killing a man. Take away all he’s got and all he's ever gonna have.” William Munny (Clint Eastwood), The Unforgiven, 1991.

Academic Rm 221
MW: 12:00-12:50

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Office Hours: MWF: 3-3:45pm; T/Th: 9:30-11:00am
Or by appointment

1181 Freshman Seminar (1-0). This course is designed to introduce incoming freshmen to the intellectual and cultural environment of the university and the impact it will have on their lives as students. Freshman Seminars incorporate various integral elements in order to facilitate first-year students’ transition from high school to college-level learning. Emphasis will be on communication, critical thinking, and information literacy. Open to all majors; restricted to and required of first-time-in-college students.

Course Objectives: GS 1881 “The Western and American Cultural Values.”
No other popular cultural genre has been so identified with America as the Western. The settlement of the frontier has been called a uniquely American experience, and the one that most defined what it meant to be an American. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Western had become ingrained in the American imagination, and decades of children imagined themselves in the position of their pulp and celluloid heroes. The heroic cowboy/gunfighter came to embody masculinity, honor, freedom, and fair play. Always on the side of justice and ready to defend the weak, the cowboy embodied our best vision of ourselves. Hollywood movies projected this image across the nation and around the world. Until the late 1960s and 70s, Americans had voracious appetite for Westerns and the heroes they imagined themselves to be. But the swaggering certainty in America’s unquestionable moral and cultural superiority began to collapse in the face of an unpopular war in Vietnam and the complaints of peoples who felt the conquest of the West had been disastrous. In the 1970s a series of revisionist Westerns questioned the celebratory narrative of traditional westerns and often recast the heroes as villains. By the 1990s, critics proclaimed the Western as dead, but has it really died or did it merely head out to new frontiers?
American Presidents are often portrayed as Cowboys.

Core Objectives for GS 1181:
- Critical Thinking 1: Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.
- Communication Skills 1: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication.
- Personal Responsibility 1: Demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.

Core Student Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to
- Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication
- Locate campus resources to solve problems/answer questions
- Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to ---

Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes
Core student learning outcomes will be assessed through course assignments
Assignments and Grades
Your final grade for this class will be based on five movie reviews, class attendance and participation, one on campus lecture paper, and a library research assignment. Paper topics will be provided, and papers are due one week after the book is assigned.

Movie Review 1 (Great Train Robbery): 50 points (Due September 4th)
Movie Review 2 (Shane): 50 points (Due September 20th)
Movie Review 3 (Blazing Saddles): 50 Points (Due October 11th)
Movie Review 4 (The Unforgiven): 50 points (Due October 18th)
Final Movie Review and Reflection (Firefly): 50 points
Library and Research Skills Assignment: 50 points (Due by October 6th)
Lecture Paper: 50 Points (Due before the end of the course)
Participation and Attendance: 50 points (Due October 25th)

Grading Scale: 400-360: A
359-320: B
319-280: C
279-240: D
239 and below: F

A Note on Assignments
All papers are due in class. Please bring a printed copy to class. The Library assignment is embedded on the course in Blackboard.

Required Readings
Any readings will be provided by instructor on Blackboard or handed out in class.

Films:
The Great Train Robbery (1903)
Shane (1953)
Blazing Saddles (1974)
The Unforgiven (1991)

Academic Integrity
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook.

American Disability Act
Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request and to implement academic accommodations.

Attendance
Attendance and participation are expected every day. More than four (4) unexcused absences will result in an automatic F for the course. In addition, late papers will not be accepted.

**Religious Holy Day**
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Tentative Class Schedule.**

**Week 1 (August 28th and 30th)**
- Goals: Welcome to General Studies.
- Origins of the Western Hero
- Film 1: *The Great Train Robbery*

**Week 2 (Sept 4 and 6th)**
- Film 2 *Shane*

**Week 3 (Sept 11 and 13)**
- Shane Continued and Discussion

**Week 4 (Sept 18 and 20)**
- Film 3 *Blazing Saddles*

**Week 5 (Sept 25 and 27)**
*Blazing Saddles* discussion.

**Week 6 (Oct 2 and 4)**
- Film 4: *The Unforgiven*
- Library Assignment. Complete by Friday, October 6th.

**Week 7 (Oct 16 and 18)**
- Film 4 *Firefly*, “The Train Job” and discussion

**Week 8 (Oct 23 and 25)**
- Last thoughts.
- Paper due on Film 4.
- Paper due on Campus lecture (if not previously turned in).
- Last Day of Class: October 25th.